

## Important Tornado Safety Tips to Follow



Tornadoes extend from severe thunderstorms and usually develop from the trailing end of a storm. The air may become very still before one hits. It is also not uncommon for the sun to be visible or skies to clear partially during a tornado. Some are easily seen and detected, while others strike quickly with little or no warning.

Some warning signs of a tornado include strong winds with cloud-base rotation, whirling dust and debris, hail and/or heavy rain and a loud rumble or roar that sounds similar to a moving train.

If it is nighttime, look for bright blue- or green-colored flashes near the ground. That is an indication of snapped power lines and an almost sure sign of intense wind or a tornado.

Two of the most fundamental precautions that you can take in the event of a tornado, no matter where you are, is staying low to or below the ground in an interior space away from windows and covering your head with your hands and arms.

It is a good idea for your family to select a place to meet following any tornado in case you are separated at the time of the incident. Phone lines or other modes of communication may be affected by the twister and are not always reliable.

Mobile homes and dwellings without basements or foundations are not a safe place to be in a tornado. If your community does not have a storm shelter, seek a sturdy building nearby. If there is no time, seek a closet or climb into the bathtub and cover yourself some sort of thick padding, such as a mattress or blankets.



If you live in a house with a finished basement, corner rooms or bathrooms and closets offer extra protection. The more concrete walls or plumbing around you, the better. This reduces the risk of your home caving in on you and better protects you from flying debris.

If you are in a high-rise building, such as a skyscraper, apartment building or dormitory, go to the lowest level or the most interior part of the building you can find. Avoid elevators and stay away from windows.

One of the worst places to be during a tornado is in a vehicle. Tornadoes generally track from southwest to northeast or from west to east. Drive in a right angle to the storm and get a considerable distance away.

However, occasionally tornadoes can take an unpredictable turn in any direction. If the storm is approaching fast, park your car quickly and seek a sturdy building or ditch. Do not stay near any vehicles, as they can easily be picked up and dropped by the tornado.

It is a good idea to prepare a shelter in advance. If you live between the Rockies and the Mississippi River and are building or buying a house, it is highly advisable that you find or build a home with either a storm cellar or an interior, windowless room close to or below the ground. Store a radio or small TV, as well as padded blankets or a mattress near or in this room.

# Lightning Safety Precautions

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When thunderstorms approach there are some steps you should take to lower your chance of becoming a lightning strike statistic. These safety procedures are suggested by the National Weather Service:

- When a thunderstorm threatens, get inside a home or large building, or inside an all-metal (not convertible) vehicle
- Inside a home, avoid using the telephone, except for emergencies
- If outside, with no time to reach a safe building or an automobile, follow these rules
- Do not stand underneath a natural lightning rod such as a tall, isolated tree
- Avoid projecting above the surrounding landscape as you would do if you were standing on a hilltop, in an open field, on the beach, or fishing from a small boat
- Get out of and away from open water
- Get away from tractors and other metal farm equipment
- Get off of and away from motorcycles, scooters, golf carts and bicycles. Put down golf clubs.
- Stay away from wire fences, clotheslines, metal pipes, rails and other metallic paths which could carry lightning to you from some distance away.
- Avoid standing in small isolated sheds or other small structures in open areas.
- In a forest, seek shelter in a low area under a thick growth of small trees. In open areas, go to a low place such as a ravine or a valley. Be alert for flash floods.
- If you're hopelessly isolated in a level field of prairie and you feel your hair stand on end - indicating that lightning is about to strike - drop to your knees and bend forward putting your hands on your knees. Do not lie flat on the ground.